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UNCLAS HARARE 001563

SIPDIS

FOR AF/S AND AF/PD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [CASC](#)

SUBJECT: TRIAL OF ANDREW MELDRUM CONTINUED UNTIL JULY 12

1. THE TRIAL OF AMERICAN CITIZEN ANDREW MELDRUM, CHARGED UNDER ZIMBABWE'S CONTROVERSIAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY ACT (AIPPA), CONTINUED THIS MORNING. THE PROSECUTION FINISHED PRESENTING ITS EVIDENCE. MELDRUM'S LAWYER THEN MADE AN APPLICATION FOR THE CASE TO BE DISCHARGED AS, IN HER OPINION, THE STATE HAD CLEARLY FAILED TO ESTABLISH A PRIMA FACIE CASE AGAINST MELDRUM. THE PROSECUTION ARGUED IT HAD ESTABLISHED THE NECESSARY EVIDENCE OF MELDRUM'S GUILT. MAGISTRATE GODFREY MACHEYO THEN CONTINUED THE CASE UNTIL JULY 12.
2. MELDRUM, A ZIMBABWEAN RESIDENT AND CORRESPONDENT FOR THE GUARDIAN NEWSPAPER (UK) HAS BEEN ACCUSED OF "PUBLISHING FALSEHOODS" IN AN APRIL 24TH ARTICLE ABOUT A WOMAN ALLEGEDLY BEHEADED BY RULING PARTY SUPPORTERS. MELDRUM PICKED UP THE STORY FROM ZIMBABWE'S DAILY NEWS, WHICH HAS SINCE ADMITTED THAT THE ALLEGATIONS OF BEHEADING WERE FALSE AND OFFERED A FORMAL APOLOGY.
3. THE CRUX OF MELDRUM'S DEFENSE THUS FAR SEEMS TO BE THE ISSUE OF JURISDICTION. CAN THE GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE APPLY AIPPA TO AN ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN A BRITISH NEWSPAPER WHICH IS NOT SOLD IN ZIMBABWE? THE PROSECUTION CONTENDS THAT ZIMBABWEANS MAY EASILY ACCESS MELDRUM'S GUARDIAN PIECE VIA THE INTERNET AND THAT INTERNET DOWNLOADING CONSTITUTES "PUBLICATION IN ZIMBABWE."
4. EMBASSY OFFICIALS ARE IN REGULAR COMMUNICATION WITH MELDRUM AND WILL CONTINUE TO ATTEND HIS TRIAL.

SULLIVAN